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Privacy and the weakness of community: Poor Post-Apartheid urban neighbourhoods in Cape Town, South Africa

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Abstract

The unintended outcome of home ownership in new low income neighbourhoods of post-apartheid South Africa has been to constrain community making. This is counter-intuitive as one would expect that home owners who are financially invested in the neighbourhood would be more community-minded than non-home owners. To explore this counter-intuitive finding, the article examines how home owners in four post-apartheid low income urban neighbourhoods in the city of Cape Town construct their lived experiences of community. Residents strictly adhere to the privacy of home and privacy has constrained the development of various dimensions of community, although unevenly. Privacy emerges from various structuring forces namely the fear of violent crime and criminality, socio-economic deprivation and the continuing salience of racial prejudice. The paper concludes that the residents' decision to be private is the critical point at which community-making is inhibited. Some dimensions of community are strong in some neighbourhoods, reflecting the resilience of human agency in the face of structural pressures or constraints.

The unintended consequence of Post-Apartheid housing policy

The post-apartheid state has built many new housing units as a conscious response to correcting some of the socio-economic disruption wrought by apartheid. The post-apartheid state claims to have approved more than three million housing subsidies between 1994 and 2008, and completed 2,358,667 units: "[A]bout 10 million people benefited from state-subsidised housing opportunities" (South Africa, 2008: 28). Whilst this claim is exaggerated (Rust, 2009), many houses have been built and many people have benefited. In metropolitan Cape Town, the number of formal houses rose from under 506,000 in 1996 to 743,000 in 2007 (Burger and van der Berg, 2009: Table 1). Most of this increase is attributed to new housing built by the state and transferred to beneficiaries under freehold.

The post-apartheid state sought to build houses with socially integrated communities. The 1994 White Paper on Housing, which became the Housing Act of 1997, committed the state to "the establishment of viable, socially and economically integrated communities". The 2005 South African Housing Policy reiterated this position. Post-apartheid housing policy is a self-conscious response to apartheid: Apartheid produced segregated and compromised communities and so the post-apartheid state should promote integration.

About a decade later, the quality of community is generally low in these new housing projects of home owners in post-apartheid Cape Town. Home owners in these neighbourhoods have weak social cohesion and few people participate in the life of their communities. This is counter-intuitive as one would expect new home owners to be more community minded. This finding is also inconsistent with research in other parts of the world (as shown below). This prompts the questions addressed in this paper: Why is it that the home owning residents in these neighbourhoods do not have viable and socially integrated communities? Do they hold unusual ideals about community, or do they have usual ideals but are unable to realise them?

This paper examines how residents imagine and construct community in four low-income post-apartheid urban neighbourhoods of Cape Town: Delft South, Delft Leiden, Tambo Square and Weltevreden Valley. The argument advanced here is that strict adherence to privacy constrains the development of various dimensions of community in these neighbourhoods, and the adherence to privacy emerges from various structuring forces. Residents however negotiate these structuring forces by using their agency to strengthen some dimensions of community.

Community and homeownership

'Community' has multiple meanings. Tonnies understood community or *Gemeinschaft* in terms of the cohesive nature of social ties traditionally associated with preindustrial or rural societies, the opposite to *Gesellschaft*, which refers to the dismal conditions of social relationships in urban areas (Christensen, 1984:161-162). Subsequent scholars moved away from this rural-urban binary. Cohen, for example, defined community as "that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediately than the abstraction we call society" (Cohen, 1985:15). In general, the literature distinguishes between two major concepts of community. There is a distinction between the territorial or geographical notion of community – which refers to the spatial contiguity or physical boundary concentrating the social relationships such as neighbourhood, town, city etc – and the relational concerned with the "quality of character of human social relationship" (Delanty, 2003; Gusfield, 1975: xvi; Willmott 1986). Many studies combine these uses, reflecting the fact that, historically, social relationships have often been spatially bounded (although this is less the case today in an era of virtual communities). The existence of 'community', whether in a spatially bounded neighbourhood or otherwise, requires what Cohen (1985:8) referred to as 'symbolic construction', through values, norms and moral codes which both underpin a sense of shared identity and exclude other people who are viewed as having different values, norms and moral codes.

Community lost perspective

Scholars have long considered the difficulty in constructing community in urban contexts. Following Tonnies, a long series of scholars discussed why it was so difficult to construct community in newly urbanised contexts, i.e. why community was 'lost' in urban areas (Sorokin and Zimmerman, 1929; Wirth, 1938; Durkheim, 1964; Weber, 1958; Nisbet, 1969; Simmel, 1971; Hunter, 1978). One reason cited for the loss of community was a retreat into privacy (Pawley, 1973; Wirth, 1938, Wellman and Leighton, 1979:256). Privacy is difficult to define, but entails at least six things: the right to be let alone; limited access in the sense of shielding one's self from unwanted access by others; secrecy in the sense of concealing certain matters from other people; control over personal information; the protection of one's personality, individuality and dignity and; intimacy in the sense of control over or limited access to one's intimate relationships or aspects of life by others (Solove, 2002:1092). To many urban sociologists, privacy and community have long been viewed as anti-theses because the values of individualism and privacy that accompany

urbanisation weaken social bonds and values of solidarity (Tonnies, 1957; Durkheim, 1964; Simmel, 1971; Pawley, 1973; Delanty, 2003, Kenna, 2009).

A second reason is that urban space has been associated with individualism, atomisation and anomie leading to the weakening of family ties and social bonds (Durkheim, 1964; Wirth, 1938:12; Simmel, 1971). This is because individuals in cities interact more with strangers, who they cannot trust, than with family and kin (Wirth, 1938). Social *dis*organisation also weakens social ties. Social control and order may be weak as a consequence of crime (Shaw and McKay, 1942; Curtis-White and Guest, 2003; Stevenson, 2003:20). Crime is hostile to the formation of social bonds. Scholars of social disorganisation held that exogenous factors such as rapid social changes in urban areas, urbanisation, industrialisation, ethnic or racial heterogeneity and de-industrialisation bring about delinquency, crime and fear of crime, and a reduction in neighbourhood cohesion (Shaw and McKay, 1942). More recent studies have identified other factors that inhibit social ties and inhibit social cohesion, for example: endogenous factors such as poverty or low socio-economic status, residential mobility, ethnic heterogeneity, weak social networks, cultural factors, residential instability, immigrant concentration, population density, mixed land use and family disruption (proportion of divorced, separated or widowed residents) (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003:374; Markowitz *et al.*, 2001:293**;** Raudenbush and Sampson,1999; and Bursik and Grasmick, 1993:294).

Community saved perspective

In contrast to the 'community lost' hypothesis, a number of more recent studies champion a 'community saved' (or 'transformed' or 'liberated') perspective (Gans, 1962; Janowitz, 1967; Suttles, 1968; Greer, 1956; Jacobs, 1961; Castells; 2001; Kenna, 2009). The perspective also views community as based on common values, but sees community as socially constructed and contextual. Community exists for as long as members adhere to the ideals and agree that these are collective. These scholars criticize the community lost perspective as romanticizing life before urbanization. Ethnographic studies of the community saved perspective suggest that common values and solidarity on the basis of kinship, friendship, ideological beliefs and associational life still persist in urban neighbourhoods (Young and Willmott, 1957; Thorns, 1976; Whyte, 1942; Gans, 1962; Liebow, 1967; Suttles, 1968). More recent studies also suggest urban residents can share goals i.e. the fundamental building blocks of community but in novel contexts. Castells (2001) identifies communicative communities that have been facilitated by the rise in information and communication technology. Delanty (2003) identifies liminal communities in spaces such as the shopping

mall and airports albeit imagined and temporary. Kenna (2009) argues that gated and enclosed neighbourhoods can foster social communities.

Contemporary defenders of the 'community lost' perspective criticize the 'community saved' argument on the basis that their evidence is based on special cases or exemptions to the general pattern of lost community in urban neighbourhoods. The neighbourhoods in which community has *not* been lost maybe remnants of the past rural community that, with time, will also be lost (Nachmias and Palen, 1982:181).

Home ownership and the formation of community

Empirical studies on homeownership and community-making, mainly done in the USA, UK and Australia, show that homeownership is associated with stronger communities thereby supporting the community saved perspective (Rohe *et al.* 2001; Rossi and Webber, 1996; Baum and Kingston, 1984; Ahlbrandt and Cunningham, 1979; Rohe and Stewart, 1996). These studies provide evidence of consent and solidarity on the basis of common interests and associational life among homeowners. Home ownership strengthens the community in three main ways. Firstly, home ownership fosters social stability in the neighbourhood (Rohe *et al.* 2001). By neighbourhood stability, Rohe *et al.* (2001:12) mean the average length of tenure among residents. If fewer residents leave the neighbourhood overtime, there will be greater neighbourhood stability. Home ownership impacts on stability through two mechanisms (Rohe and Stewart, 1996). The first mechanism is human capital accumulation in terms of age, education and income gained because home owners anticipate staying longer in the same home. The second mechanism is that in addition to use interest, home owners have exchange interest – unlike renters – which provides the incentive for them to maintain and improve their houses and to join together with other home owners to protect themselves against collective threats such as crime rates.

The second way in which home ownership strengthens community bonds is through social involvement and civic participation of home owners in the neighbourhood (Baum and Kingston, 1984; Ahlbrandt and Cunningham, 1979; Rohe and Stewart, 1996; Rossi and Webber, 1996). This is well captured by Rohe and Stewart (1996:54-55) who show that home owners participate in community organisations and neighbourhood social interaction more than renters because they are more keen to improve their neighbourhood and because of given residential stability.

The third way is that home ownership fosters socially desirable behaviours among youth and adults which reduce delinquency and crime (Green and White, 1997; Boehm and Schlottman, 1999). The studies show that, since anti-social behaviour affects property prices in a neighbourhood, home owners are more concerned with controlling such behaviour both among the local youth and their own children because of the economic and emotional stake they have in the neighbourhood. They therefore make more effort to discipline their children and local youth than renters who do not have or much of a stake in the neighbourhood (Green and White, 1997). Haurin & Haurin (2000) further argue that, psychologically, a stable home allows children to spend more time with their parents and neighbours which allows for stronger relationships and cognitive and emotional stability, which in turn diminishes involvement in undesirable social behaviour.

In sum, studies into the quality of community provide evidence of the conditions under which community is lost or saved. Community is lost when residents confine themselves more to the solitude of their privacy than to their neighbourhood or society. Community is also lost when there are high levels of social disorganisation, which can be as a result of exogenous factors which include periods of rapid social change such as urbanisation and endogenous factors which include crime and other socio-economic factors. Community is saved on the condition that there is consent and solidarity on the basis of kinship, friendship, ideological beliefs and associational life. Studies of home ownership show that on the basis of the common values associated with home owning, home owners possess common values and solidarity toward building and safe-guarding their property.

Community lost? The South African context

In South Africa, the study of community is shaped by the country's apartheid history as a structural force. These studies show that community has been lost. The main reason is high levels of violent crime in the past perhaps due to apartheid but increasingly due to socio-economic and psychological factors.

Though the link is not overtly made, several studies suggest that the socio-economic, cultural and psychological effects of apartheid are to blame for the extremely high levels of violent crime in South Africa (CSVR, 2009a: Whyte, 2010; Shaw and Gastrow, 2001; Robertson, 1998), which constrain community-making. This is known in the South African case because reliable statistical data shows that criminal violent crime levels such as homicide were already high in the 1980s (Kynoch 2005: 495 & 501). Violent gangs also operated from the

1960s on the Cape Flats, Cape Town's most violent area. Recently however, apartheid is seen as less pertinent an explanation for current levels of violence than socio-economic, cultural and psychological factors (Robertson, 1998; Whyte, 2010; Demombynes and Özler, 2002).

Psychological and cultural factors are primary causes of violence, which constrains the formation of community. From the cultural perspective, the CSVR (2009a:8) stated that "the core of the problem of violent crime in South Africa is a culture of violence and criminality. This finding confirmed Robertson's (1998) finding whose study suggested that South Africa's violent political history during apartheid imparted in South Africans a "culture of violence" as a result of the prolonged struggle against apartheid. Apartheid has also left psychological consequences informed by that culture, which underlie the current high levels of violent crime and undermine social cohesion (Whyte, 2010:3; CSVR, 2009b:5).

Socio-economic factors such as poverty and unemployment which significantly affects the non-white population, family disruption in terms of separated, divorced or widowed residents, weak social networks, and residential instability that are linked to forced removals and the migrant worker system remain persistent and weaken social cohesion. These factors are among the list of endogenous factors which empirical studies in South Africa and elsewhere find to be determinants of social disorganisation in neighbourhoods (Breetzke, 2010; Emmet, 2003; Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003:374; Markowitz *et al.*, 2001:293**;** Raudenbush and Sampson, 1999; and Bursik and Grasmick, 1993:294). The literature shows that in the post-apartheid era, social disruption in communities remains significant (Bray et al., 2010; Breetzke, 2010: 446; Berg & Schärf, 2004; Emmett, 2003; Nina, 2000; Ross 2010, 2005). In particular, family disruption remains significant. Surveys such as The Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS) found that "Fewer than half of all adolescents and only just half of all children in Cape Town live with both their biological parents, with the majority of absent parents being fathers (Bray et al. 2010: 51-53).

Another factor that constrains community in new desegregated neighbourhoods is the continued salience of racial prejudice and mistrust among residents (Oldfield, 2000; 2004; Millstein, 2007; Seekings, 2008a) even though new evidence suggests that this is gradually weakening (Muyeba and Seekings, 2010).

In sum, the literature shows that community has been lost in South Africa. In particular, violent crime constrains community making. Secondly, endogenous socio-economic factors such as poverty, family disruption in the sense of separation and divorce also undermine community making. Thirdly, the

continuing salience of racial prejudice continues to undermine levels of trust and social cohesion in desegregated neighbourhoods. The literature however still requires empirical research that shows the specific mechanism through which these structuring forces constrain community. The paper shows that these structuring forces constrain community making by confining residents to the privacy of their homes and that privacy as a consequence of people's agency is the critical point at which community is constrained.

Method

During 2009, our study interviewed 48 residents living in the four newly-built low-income urban neighbourhoods of Delft South, Delft Leiden, Tambo Square and Weltevreden Valley. Tambo Square is the oldest among these with houses built from 1994 and being occupied from 1996. Delft South was occupied from 1998, Delft Leiden in 2001 and Weltevreden Valley in 2002. These neighbourhoods are made up of poor residents of mixed origins. Some previously lived in backyards of apartheid era coloured neighbourhoods while others migrated from the Eastern Cape, particularly those living in Weltevreden Valley. The samples of interviewees were selected in such a way that they were representative of these neighbourhoods in terms of geographical coverage. They included employed and unemployed men and women, with ages ranging from 25 to 69. However, the samples cannot be assumed to be fully representative of these neighbourhoods nor are they fully representative of Cape Town. Interviews were conducted by Xhosa-, Afrikaans- and English-speaking interviewers, as appropriate, using semi-structured interview guidelines.

Constructing a community of privacy: "Neighbours should be neither heard nor seen[1]"

This section presents the argument that though the privacy of home is important for residents, it is unusual in the cases investigated as neighbours are conspicuously weary of intimacy in their relations. Ethnographic evidence in South Africa shows that privacy is an important ideal among people living in urban neighbourhoods. Ross (2005: 633) found in her study of The Park, later called The Village, that privacy was foreground and was central to the ideal of respectability by residents. Though the link to respectability is not made here,

[1] DL#3

by insisting on their own privacy, neighbours impose a general norm and practice of privacy on their neighbours.

Emphasizing privacy, an interviewee from Delft Leiden told us that a neighbour should be: *"*More like us, accepting to other people, more open, and stop interfering in other people's business. Basically be like a neighbour should be; unheard of, unseen…" (DL #3). Another interviewee interestingly said "I wished for neighbours who is still." (DL #6). The ideal of privacy was particularly well explained in our conversation with a man who had come from the Eastern Cape (WV #42) and held specific notions of urban living as private and independent. He held the notion that as an urbanite you take care of everything yourself. He views problems such as taking care of his child, deprivation and unemployment as private. Neighbours are strangers who should not be trusted, befriended or bothered with one's own private problems.

Home-owners in these neighbourhoods are wary of intimacy thereby undermining relationships with their immediate neighbours. Residents seem to be committed to the idea that the less the neighbour knows about his/her home, the better the likelihood that they will co-exist peacefully. In general, residents of the four neighbourhoods in our study have cordial relationships with their immediate neighbours, expressed in routine greetings and more occasional forms of petty mutual assistance, but they limit the forms and depth of their interactions. They also expressed limited knowledge of their neighbours as they keep their relations at a superficial level. Intimacy leaves one vulnerable to jealousy, gossip and envy, which are widespread in these neighbourhoods. Resorting to privacy is an effective way of guarding oneself against these vices. The result is a weakened level of social cohesion in the neighbourhood.

In Tambo Square, most interviewees said that they got on well with their neighbours, but in most cases their knowledge of their neighbours and their interactions were limited. They all emphasised how they just greet each other. In the northern part of Tambo Square, most people greeted their neighbours, but rarely interacted more substantively with more than one of their immediate neighbours. In the southern part of Tambo Square though, and in one small part of the northern part, there seems to be much more interaction between immediate neighbours.

In Weltevreden Valley, all of the interviewees said that they knew their neighbours well and gave examples of the activities they did together such as help with childcare, drinking, or simply visiting and chatting yet a few expressed their reservations regarding intimacy. Many of our interviewees in Weltevreden Valley have some kind of a relationship with most of their neighbours and do not restrict themselves to a single neighbour. When

differences occur, they are discussed and (generally) resolved: "We sit down and talk about it" (WV#50). Other people in Weltevreden Valley admitted that their relationships with their neighbours were not especially close, or were limited to greetings. One resident told us that "... I just know them by seeing them. Just greeting each other, … and [it] ends there." (WV#45)

In Delft Leiden, some residents showed how well they knew their neighbours by giving details about them such as their age, marriage and who does the washing and other chores at the house (DL#3). Even in Delft Leiden, however, some residents acknowledge how little they know about their neighbours. When we asked one of the respondents whether he thought that he was poorer or richer than the neighbours, he said: "I can't say that because we don't know each other in the area. We don't know … what is your income of your neighbour..." (DL#2). A number of residents in Delft Leiden indicated that their relationships with neighbours did not extend much beyond greetings.

Residents told us that they guard their intimacy to avoid jealousy and gossip. The theme of jealousy came up often in interviews. Amidst widespread poverty, spending money can prompt hostility as residents become suspicious as to where the money came from. Several Tambo Square residents remarked on the jealousy prompted by signs of material success. In the presence of so much poverty, gossip and jealousy emerge as speculation of how it happened that a neighbour is doing well. Gossip is inherent in social interactions between these neighbours, and is one reason why residents are private and wary of intimacy. "There is always gossip here", said one woman (TS#37). One Weltevreden Valley resident told us that her neighbours were resentful of her when they saw her buying things, because she did not work. She did not explain from where her income came; if it came from boyfriends, then she might be mistaking jealousy for disapproval (WV#46).

Overall, most of these relationships are superficial as people stick to their privacy and guard their intimacy. In his treatise on the conceptualisation of privacy, Solove (2002: 1121) discusses a theory of privacy as intimacy in the sense of limited access or control given to others by an individual. The theory suggests that people value privacy so that they can maintain the desired level of intimacy for each of the varied relationships. In extension, and to which this paper is amenable, Ramphele (2002:106) in her ethnographic study of New Crossroads suggests that by focussing on community, residents set their horizons beyond their personal and family needs. The meeting of their own personal and family needs create tensions with neighbours amid inadequate basic resources. Neighbours are envious and jealous of what the other neighbour has in their home. Indeed Ross (2010:160-163), Bray *et al*. (2010:108) and Ashforth (1998) also discuss how jealousy undermines relationships in South

African neighbourhoods. Ashforth (1998:507) puts it into perspective by showing that in Soweto, the new post-apartheid opportunities have generated inequalities among Africans who in previous generations were compelled to live in conditions of relative socio-economic parity. These factors expand the prospects for jealousy, envy and gossip and the privacy of home offers some assured level of protection.

Also, intimacy comes with the sharing of resources, which residents do not have considering the living conditions dictated by high unemployment and high dependency rates. Kin in South African neighbourhoods are not as supportive to each other as previously thought and this could be attributed to the fact that residents are recognising fewer and more conditional obligations toward kin because of the scarcity of resources (Harper and Seekings, 2010; Seekings, 2008b). In the presence of limited resources, sharing resources takes a much more restricted form such as stokvels among women and avoidance of financial obligation in choice of organisations such as people in Khayelitsha converting to Islam because the mosque asks for fewer contributions than Christian churches (Lee, 2001).

Crime and the retreat into safety

The fear of violent crime confines home owners to the safety of their home and discourages participation in civic activities, even though they have a financial stake in their neighbourhood. Residents do not come together to establish social order and control in the presence of so much violent crime, though Delft Leiden is slightly more organised than the other neighbourhoods. Strict adherence to privacy hinders collective involvement such that these neighbourhoods are more appropriately described in terms of social disorganisation. Given the evident failure of the police to prevent or even contain crime, people recognize the value in collective organization or action to bring about social order and control but most prefer to stay in their homes even when they hear their neighbour being attacked. An important reason for this is that residents are rarely able to overcome their individual vulnerability to crime to act effectively together with their neighbours. The strict adherence to privacy not only prevents one from being a victim but also prevents these residents from coming together collectively.

In the northern part of Tambo Square, residents stayed indoors in the event of crime, though there were occasions when they would step out of their homes. Many interviewees emphasised the passivity of neighbours. “They would just walk past, they saw people breaking in and they did nothing” – whilst the house

was emptied (TSN#33's wife). In at least one case this was related to the absence of men in the street. Interviewees said residents' responses are limited. One resident said "We only phone each other at night to say there is a thief in your yard" (TS#34). Residents told us that some come out of their houses but "The others will say that they did not hear. They will come out when everything is over. Out of curiosity ..." (TS#36). Residents are not entirely inactive in the face of crime as some residents discussed positively collective responses to crime. On another instance, residents caught an alleged rapist and beat him up before turning him over to the police.

The small size of the southern part of Tambo Square facilitated residents' combining to strengthen social order and control. In this small cluster of about 100 houses, there was a period of marked cohesion when people first moved in, because they united around the collective demand to build a protective wall around the neighbourhood, to establish an enclosed neighbourhood. The wall would, especially, separate the coloured residents of the neighbourhood from the African township of Guguletu, on the other side of the railway tracks. But alleged corruption among the leaders resulted in residents demanding their money back and they "dropped everything" (TSS#34). Residents later joined together to form a 'neighbourhood watch' group but this too, proved short-lived.

Social order and control are elusive in Delft South. Some residents say that there is a neighbourhood watch, but most residents say either that it exists intermittently, it used to exist but does not exist now, or that they are unaware of any organisation. There were references to a councillor who resolved disputes (DS#24), another woman referred to meetings held at the local rent office by 'SANCO' – meaning the local civic organization or 'branch' of the South African National Civic Organisation (DS#22). There seemed to be uneven or intermittent activity in which few people actually participate.

Consequently, the retreat into privacy is acutest in Delft South, a high poverty and high crime area. Residents complained that neighbours would not step in if a crime was being committed. Some of the criminals are local. "If you respond, … you are going to be hated by those children" (DS#30). Another resident told us that when 'children' from a different neighbourhood robbed a neighbour of his cell-phone, "there was nothing we could do because they carried big knives" so no one even opened their mouths (DS#25). Delft South residents explain that "there is no committee in this area, you see, that is why most of the people, when something happens, they go to the police station" (although, she added, the police often say it's not their problem) (DS#19's wife). These residents leave it to each household to deal with its own crime as they have been unable to muster their strength to organise and respond collectively as a community.

There was some evidence that social order and control was effective in Delft Leiden though none of our interviewees had direct involvement. A neighbourhood watch operated intermittently, and as an adjunct to the police rather than independently. According to one resident the neighbourhood watch functions but "very very weak, because they always go with the police" (DL# 2). Another resident said that the Neighbourhood Watch operated "now and then" (DS#18), and another said that it had been more active in the past (DS#19's wife). None of our interviewees participated in the Neighbourhood Watch, and the ones we asked said they did not even know anyone who did. There was also a more active 'committee' that helped to settle disputes, at least among African residents of the neighbourhood. This committee operated in much the same way as many similar extra-system popular courts (including the 'people's courts' of the 1980s). There was only one account of this committee. Although our informant said that as many as one or even two hundred people might participate, none of our other interviewees mentioned participating themselves, and only some of our other interviewees in Delft South mentioned the committee (see DS#27). However, residents also retreated into the confines of their privacy, primarily because of high crime levels. One interviewee was asked, 'why didn't you intervene?' He replied with a sense of fear: "... Sometimes they carry guns, sometimes they carry knives, you see, so I can't go out alone." (DL#2).

Weltevreden Valley seems to be the neighbourhood with the most collective action, perhaps rooted in a shared history (not only in Cape Town, but in the Eastern Cape before that). When asked to say what keeps their 'community' together, residents mentioned that they hold meetings whenever there is a problem. "We also attend meetings and I think that keep us together", said one (WV#43); "the residents are working together, by trying to fight crime", said another, adding that they "call [a] meeting ... when there's something wrong" (WV#45). It is unclear how many residents participate: Most interviewees referred to other people doing things, i.e. they used 'they' rather than 'we'. Some residents said that the sense of togetherness was weak. Another told us that she had not been invited to a meeting. A third complained that 'community' projects were not inclusive. Others warned against being too active in securing the community. (WV#44).

Overall, though interviewees recognise the importance of assisting neighbours, strict adherence to privacy offers the best chance of survival than to get involved in contributing to social order and control. As Jurgens, & Landman (2006) have shown, fear of crime seems to be the main reason why many South Africans are retreating into the privacy of their homes. Indeed in the neighbourhoods investigated by this study, the fear of high levels of violent

crime in surrounding neighbourhoods as well as within the neighbourhoods drives residents to retreat into their homes, thereby constraining community making. Despite this overall situation, social order and control was recognisable in the case of Delft Leiden.

Trust and access to private space: Friends, family and faith

The restriction of one's private space to close friends, close family and members of the same faith, and inversely the exclusion of neighbours to that space constrains community making. Trusting people to access one's privacy in these neighbourhoods is restricted to close friends, family and members of the same faith to the exclusion of neighbours. Trust in these four neighbourhoods does not mean that residents are allowed access to a neighbour's private sphere but rather means that one expects neighbours to respect and not to interfere in his or her private space. Friends and members of the same church tend to live elsewhere in other neighbourhoods. Because they live elsewhere, the formation of social networks is limited and existing ones are weakened. Few residents had more than one close friend in the immediate neighbourhood. Other people in the neighbourhood, rarely immediate neighbours, can however become close friends. Interviewees were asked whether most people in the neighbourhood could be trusted. Although most interviewees felt that they could trust their neighbours in all neighbourhoods, the extent of that trust generally only extended as far as checking on their house.

"Oh no", said a woman, laughing; "you only trust yourself here" (WV#47). Another woman agreed that you could "not [trust] all of them, because the others are tsotsis" [thieves] (WV#43). According to one African woman: "...we cannot leave our keys with them [neighbours]. One day, on our return, the DVD was unplugged. Tell me how that happened? And we left it with someone we trusted. With a woman that has been living close to us for years..." (DL#3).

In a neighbourhood like Weltevreden Valley, where many people leave Cape Town over Christmas (and at other times also) to return to the Eastern Cape, it is important to have a neighbour who can keep an eye on a house. "When I go out, the neighbours look after the house", said one woman in Weltevreden Valley (WV#43). And, according to a man: "Even when I go home [to the Eastern Cape] I leave my stuff in the house..." (WV#45). According to another woman, "I cannot say they are trusted ... I cannot trust anyone" (WV#46).

Even for the house, they would not allow the neighbour to sleep in the house when they are away. One woman said she trusted her neighbours "because when I go I leave them to look after my house", but added "I can't say I trust them in a way that I can put them in my house – no". When asked whether she would leave her children in her neighbour's care, she answered "No, perhaps I can do that with my friend not a neighbour" (WV#47).

Friendship was a strong dimension in Weltevreden Valley as some of the interviewees met their closest friends there and in previous places of residence. One woman told us that she had met her closest friends there; one lived close by, a second lived near to her mother (who sometimes looked after her child) (WV#44). Other interviewees had kept their closest friendships from the Eastern Cape, where they had grown up. One man knew his closest friend when they both lived in the Eastern Cape, but they became close when they both moved to Weltevreden Valley (WV#42). A common culture and historical origin was important as a basis for friendship because many residents were Xhosa speaking and originated from the Eastern Cape.

Other residents, however, emphasised the risks of close friendship and could only share their privacy with their family members. Some said that they did not believe in having any close friends because of jealousy and gossip, and preferred to have their family members as friends. If you tell your secrets to your friends, warned one woman, they might use this against you. They might get jealous because your boyfriend is generous. They might ask themselves "why does she have a man and I don't?", and they may "do funny things or even use muti so that this man can leave me" (TSS#36).

Generally, in Tambo Square residents had one close friend in the immediate neighbourhood. There would be a lot of conversation and visits between these close friends, whilst interactions with other neighbours would be limited to greetings. Houses are private spaces, and only good and trusted friends are admitted, whereas interaction in the street is commonplace. The content of close relationships is, unsurprisingly, different also. "[Laughing] Oh gosh! Gossip! We joke more then we gossip..." (TS#38). Some interviewees interact little with any of their neighbours, most often because they have a lot of interaction within the family. As one put it, "we, as a family, are to ourselves most of the time" (TS#34), whilst another says that "I spend time with my children and husband, I [only] speak and greet someone passing by if they want to speak to me" (TS#36). As one person (TS 35's spouse) put it, the neighbours are just neighbours. In her case, "my children are my best friends".

Interaction with family was also strong in Delft South. One of our interviewees in Delft South similarly said that she "only spends time with my children"

(DS#20), and another told us that she doesn't "spend time with any of them", meaning her neighbours, but talks with her cousin who "stays at the back of my house*"* (DS#22). "My wife and my children are my friends", says another Delft South resident (DS#24), whilst another says "I don't have any friends, my friend is my wife" (DS#23).

The church is another source of intimate relationships. An interviewee told us that "I don't have a friend, my friend is [the] church" (which was in Guguletu, not Weltevreden Valley itself) (WV#49).

Not all behaviour toward neighbours can be pinned down on adherence to privacy as there is, of course, some variation between people in terms of their demeanour and lifestyle. Some people are more open and friendly, and others more reserved or guarded. Also, some people work odd hours which gives them few opportunities to interact with neighbours.

Negotiating privacy and community in mutual assistance and collective activities

In this section, the paper shows that not all dimensions of community are weak because home owners in these neighbourhoods use their human agency to negotiate community constraining factors to pursue values of community through mutual assistance and some collective activities. In most neighbourhoods, the interactions occasionally extend beyond greetings and occasional social visits. Residents – especially women – often borrow from each other, and more rarely join together in some collective activity as a form of coping mechanism against deprivation. Therefore not all aspects of community are lost.

Mutual assistance and collective activities were particularly strong in Weltevreden Valley than in the other two neighbourhoods. Residents in Weltevreden Valley seem to engage in a wide range of collective activities. These include attending children's birthday parties, going for prayers during funerals taking place in the community, collective cleaning of streets, attending Xhosa traditional ceremonies (*amagongqo*) in the neighbourhood, participating in savings associations, and drinking (alcohol) together. The strength of this dimension owes to the common Eastern Cape historical and cultural background among residents. Not everyone participated in such collective activities, however.

Similarly but less so in Tambo Square, residents borrow small items from each other, and help each other in the event of an illness or death in the family. "That is the only time the whole community will support you... But otherwise, everyone keeps to themselves." (TS#35's wife). In times of loss, neighbours "each give R20 to help there..." (TS#39). One of the major causes of neighbours asking to borrow money is when their pre-paid electricity runs out which TS #35 said "is everyone's weak point".

In Delft South, also, people say that neighbours help each other but this has to be reciprocal almost to a point where it is an exchange. People help people they know well, who can be relied on to repay or to reciprocate; they do not help people on whom they cannot rely. "People willing to help each other without any expectations are very few. I will have to know you very well before I… before I will help you..." (DS#20). Sometimes people whom you have helped will not reciprocate. "You will help them when they need something, but even though they will have, they will not help you', said one; 'there are many people who you cannot trust" (TS#33's neighbour). Another woman said that people only help each other out with 'small things' (DS#25).

People tend to rely on specific individuals for assistance: a friend (DS#21), "my neighbour oppos*ite*" (DS#23), "my neighbours there at the back, and the other one on the corner" (DS#28).

People however indicate that mutual assistance need not entail a close relationship. "A person just help you and not with her whole heart". *(WV#47).* Similarly, a coloured woman in Delft South told us: "When you ask they're going to be good to you then tomorrow the people talk 'oh she got no money and she got that and that and she's like that'". (DS#18). Others mention that some people charge interest on the money they lend to their neighbours. Some residents seem hesitant to borrow from a neighbour in case the neighbour tells other people. Faced with financial problems, people prefer to ask kin (or a close friend).

Overall, mutual assistance and collective activities are important in Weltevreden Valley in comparison to the other neighbourhoods though this does not entail a close relationship. Ramphele (2002:105) suggests that given the low levels of essential services, this kind of cooperation takes place because sharing is often the only way of ensuring access to resources. Ross (2005:636) also explained these activities primarily in terms of access to resources through domestic fluidity, whereby residents gave some form of assistance to a neighbour in order to generate rights to that household and its products. However, in our case, these activities do not allow neighbours to claim access to one's private dwelling.

Conclusion

The post-apartheid state in South Africa built and transferred many houses to residents under freehold with the intention of building viable socially integrated communities. Indeed much scholarly evidence supports the theory that home ownership fosters strong communities. However in the South African case, social cohesion remains low despite the remarkable increase of home ownership in general and the creation of home owning neighbourhoods in particular. This paper has dealt with this counterintuitive state of affairs by examining how residents socially construct and experience community. The paper examined residents' lived experiences using various dimensions of community in four low income post-Apartheid urban neighbourhoods of Cape Town.

Factors identified in the literature are important but this paper finds that the weakness of community in the neighbourhoods investigated is attributed specifically to residents' strict adherence to privacy. Violent crime and poverty are merely vehicles to one's privacy which has led to weak communities rather than direct causes of weak communities. Each of the dimensions examined was constrained by adherence to privacy in all the neighbourhoods but less so in Weltevreden Valley. In other residents, some of the dimensions such as mutual assistance were also identified as valued and exercised by residents suggesting that residents exercise their agency on specific dimensions of community.

Though overall levels of community remain low, the few specific dimensions that emerged strong indicate that the community lost perspective fails to completely explain the South African context. The community transformed perspective explains the South African case only to the extent that specific dimensions indicate some level of community-making in these neighbourhoods. It is difficult to attribute these "strengths" to home ownership though it is likely that these communities can be strengthened if home owners in these neighbourhoods were less private. This means the agency of home owners is an important condition for community making in these neighbourhoods. Therefore, because some dimensions of 'community' are strong in some neighbourhoods, this reflects the resilience of human agency in the face of structural pressures or constraints.

This strengthens the broader literature on the effects of home ownership on the formation of community in a small way; that structural forces lead to privacy which constrains community making and that; Home ownership fosters community on the condition that home owners are less private. In agreement with Ross (2005) privacy is an important aspect of community but argue that severe forms of privacy in social relationships undermine community-making.

Indeed Tunick (2001:532) puts it succinctly that privacy conflicts with community in the sense that some people who prize their home as a castle of solitude may be averse to working with others toward common goals. Tunick (2001:531) further acknowledges that though privacy helps maintain close ties to family and friends, sometimes such commitments restrict us from our commitments to the state institutions, civil society and – in this specific case – to community.

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